



CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY CARE, INC

*Caring From
Every Perspective*

43 Enterprise Drive
Bristol, CT 06010-7472
Telephone: 860-589-6226
Facsimile: 860-585-0858

DIVISIONS:

*Care Management Associates
Case Management Institute
CyberCAM*

**Testimony on the Department of Social Services' Budget
Appropriations Committee**

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**By Sherry Ostrout, Director of Government Initiatives
Connecticut Community Care, Inc (CCCI)**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Sherry Ostrout, Director of Government Initiatives at CCCI. CCCI is one of CT's access agencies providing care management as well as hospital and nursing home transitional supports for participants of the Connecticut Home Care Program and the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Project. In the past year we have served over 13,000 CT residents.

First and foremost, on behalf of CCCI I am here to support Governor Malloy's recommendations to enhance community based services for those who wish to continue living at home or who wish to move out of a nursing home yet require ongoing assistance to do so.

We are pleased that the recommendations include an expansion of assisted living to include 50 more people; that monies are allocated toward home modifications and the expansion of congregate living opportunities; that grants and funding will support nursing home diversification, that investments are proposed to retrain direct service workers such as nurses aides to work in a community setting; that the new independent support broker service will be added to the menu of services that will assist people to self-direct their own supports.

Finally, CCCI supports the concept of nurses delegating medication administration to home health aides and agency-based personal care assistants. We look forward to opportunities to participate in developing regulation and interim policies and protocols to ensure quality of service and consumer safeguards.

I would like to highlight a couple of these items and one that is related but not yet mentioned

We are thrilled that the budget proposal includes the addition of a new cost-effective service to the Personal Care Assistance waiver - the independent support broker service.

Independent Support Broker Service

For two years CCCI had the honor of demonstrating a support broker service with participants of Money Follows the Person and participants of the Personal Care Assistance Waiver thanks to the funding provided by the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities. For several months, prior to actually demonstrating the service, we worked very closely with key stakeholders – various state departments and state programs, advocates and most importantly a number of people who are participants of the Personal Care Assistance waiver (PCA Waiver).

What we learned:

- The PCA Waiver was built on values that we all hold dear – that individuals have the right to live how and where one chooses. And, that if supports are needed to live a full life (to work, play and be an engaged contributing citizen) “I can do a better job if I can hire who I choose - to do what I need - when I need it.
- The PCA Waiver is fully self-directed – that is, the only personal care support provided is an individually hired person – called a personal care assistant – whereby the consumer hires, supervises, schedules and trains who they think will best support them.
- Many people who are able to self-direct simply do not have the tools, resources or skills to be effective managers.

In response, CCCI developed the Self-Directed Supports Services Program – an intensive in-home one-on-one management training program for those coming out of nursing homes on MFP or those struggling with self-direction on the PCA Waiver Program. We served 58 people. The post-service satisfaction survey asked many questions, one of which is “Now that you have had the training do you feel more confident as an employer?” Every respondent said yes- enthusiastically. Another question, “If there was one piece of advice you would like to give to a new employer would it be?” Responses included: Set good boundaries, try not to become overwhelmed, everyone is replaceable so your top priority should be getting your needs met by hiring the right PCA, scheduling is very important, documentation is very important...

CCCI looks forward to working with the Department further on this important self-directed support service.

PCA Waiver and the Connecticut Home Care Program (CHCP)

By transferring people who are 65 years or above to the CHCP Waiver it opens up slots for people who are on the PCA Waiver waitlist – some who have been waiting for well over one year. Approximately 60 more people under 65 will be served. However, unless you are 65, waiting lists continue across programs and are a significant barrier to Medicaid rebalancing. If Medicaid rebalancing is to become a reality in CT we must continue moving public policy towards equal access to community supports for people based on their functional needs, not age or diagnosis. Similarly, another nursing home diversion program, CHCP shows a significant decrease in funding by over \$17 mil. This is based on actual expenditures this past year in the state funded program. We can certainly say that based on the

decrease in enrollment and decrease in expenditures the 7% cost share on CHCP services has indeed had a chilling effect on enrollment. CHCP is the most successful nursing home diversion program in CT.

A 50% reduction in funding to Independent Living Centers

The budget recommends a 50% reduction in state support to Independent Living Centers. This, for organizations that have a small budget already, can cause the doors to close.

CCCI stands in support of our Independent Living Centers who serve thousands of people with disabilities. DSS has expressed the deep value of these Centers by designating all 5 Centers as core partners in the State's developing Aging and Disability Resource Centers. I find this to be a significant disconnect between stated value and funding that amounts to just over \$50,000 per Center. CCCI has had the privilege of partnering with the NC and E Centers along with the local Area Agencies on Aging to form a strong Aging and Disability Resource Network. I would encourage the Appropriations Committee to review this line in the budget, which is very small, yet has enormous ramifications.

Thank you.